

**APPLICATION**  
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**TITLE:     DIGITAL DELAY LOCKED LOOP WITH EXTENDED  
              PHASE CAPTURE RANGE**

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## **DIGITAL DELAY LOCKED LOOP WITH EXTENDED PHASE CAPTURE RANGE**

### **Background of Invention**

[0001] As shown in Figure 1, a typical computer system **10** has, among other components, a microprocessor **12**, one or more forms of memory **14**, integrated circuits **16** having specific functionalities, and peripheral computer resources (not shown), e.g., monitor, keyboard, software programs, etc. These components communicate with one another via communication paths **19**, e.g., wires, buses, etc., to accomplish the various tasks of the computer system **10**.

[0002] In order to properly accomplish such tasks, the computer system **10** relies on the basis of time to coordinate its various operations. To that end, a crystal oscillator **18** generates a system clock signal (referred to and known in the art as “reference clock” and shown in Figure 1 as SYS\_CLK) to various parts of the computer system **10**. Modern microprocessors and other integrated circuits, however, are typically capable of operating at frequencies significantly higher than the system clock, and thus, it becomes important to ensure that operations involving the microprocessor **12** and the other components of the computer system **10** use a proper and accurate reference of time.

[0003] Accordingly, as the frequencies of modern computers continue to increase, the need to rapidly transmit data between circuit interfaces also increases. To accurately receive data, a clock signal is often transmitted to help recover data transmitted to a receiving circuit by some transmitting circuit. The clock signal determines when the data should be sampled by the receiving circuit. In some cases, the clock signal may change state at the beginning of the time the data is valid. However, this is typically undesirable because the receiving circuit operates better when the clock signal is detected during the middle of the time the data is

valid. In other cases, the clock signal may degrade as it propagates from its transmission point. Such degradation may result from process, voltage, and/or temperature conditions that directly or indirectly affect the clock signal. To guard against the adverse effects of poor and inaccurate clock signal transmission, a delay locked loop (“DLL”) is commonly used to generate a copy of the clock signal at a fixed phase shift with respect to the original clock signal.

[0004] Figure 2 shows a portion of a typical computer system in which a DLL 30 is used. In Figure 2, data 32 is transmitted from a transmitting circuit 34 to a receiving circuit 36. To aid in the recovery of the data 32 by the receiving circuit 36, a clock signal 38 is transmitted along with the data 32. To ensure that the data 32 is properly latched by the receiving circuit 36, the DLL 30 (which in Figure 2 is shown as being part of the receiving circuit 36) regenerates the clock signal 38 to a valid voltage level and creates a phase shifted version of the clock signal 38. Accordingly, the use of the DLL 30 in this fashion ensures (1) that the data 32 is properly latched by triggering the receiving circuit 36 at a point in time in which the data 32 is valid and (2) that the clock signal 38 is buffered by the receiving circuit 36.

[0005] DLLs, as suggested above, are widely used in the interfaces between integrated circuits (e.g., memory circuits, microprocessors, etc.). Various DLL architectures (e.g., digital DLLs, analog DLLs, open loop DLLs, closed loop DLLs, etc.) have been implemented to achieve fast locking, low jitter, and robust operation across a wide range of process, voltage, and temperature (PVT) conditions.

### **Summary of Invention**

[0006] According to one aspect of one or more embodiments of the present invention, a computer system comprises a delay array arranged to generate an

output signal that is delayed with respect to an input signal by an amount indicated by a delay code provided to the delay array, a shift controller operatively connected to the delay array arranged to update the delay code dependent on a phase comparison of the input signal and the output signal, and a detection circuit arranged to monitor the delay code, where, the detection circuit, in response to a predetermined condition of the delay code, causes a self-reset of the delay code to a value different than that of a value of the delay code at one of a previous reset and an initial startup of the delay array.

[0007] According to one aspect of one or more embodiments of the present invention, a computer system comprises means for delaying an input signal to generate an output signal, the means for delaying being dependent on a delay code indicative of an amount of delay by which to delay the input signal, means for comparing phases of the input signal and the output signal, means for updating the delay code dependent on the means for comparing phases, means for monitoring the delay code, and means for resetting the delay code in response to a detected predetermined condition of the delay code, where the delay code is reset to a value different than a value of the delay code present at one of a previous reset and an initial startup of the means for delaying.

[0008] According to one aspect of one or more embodiments of the present invention, a method for performing delay locked loop operations comprises: delaying an input signal to generate an output signal, where the output signal is delayed with respect to the input signal by an amount indicated by a delay code; comparing phases of the input signal and the output signal; updating the delay code dependent on the comparing; and monitoring the delay code for a predetermined condition, where, in response to detecting the predetermined condition, resetting the delay code to a value different than a value of the delay code present at least at a previous reset and initial startup of the delaying.

[0009] Other aspects and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following description and the appended claims.

### **Brief Description of Drawings**

[0010] Figure 1 shows a typical computer system.

[0011] Figure 2 shows a portion of a typical computer system in which a DLL is used.

[0012] Figure 3 shows an interface between a microprocessor and memory in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] Figure 4 shows a digital delay locked loop in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

[0014] Figure 5 shows a digital shift controller of a digital delay locked loop.

[0015] Figure 6 shows timing diagrams associated with phase comparison of signals by the digital shift controller shown in Figure 5.

### **Detailed Description**

[0016] Figure 3 shows an exemplary interface in which a digital delay locked loop in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention may be used. Specifically, Figure 3 shows an interface **40** between memory **42** and a microprocessor **45**. During a memory read operation, a memory strobe signal **STROBE\_IN** is delayed by a digital delay locked loop **44** residing in the microprocessor **45**. The resulting delayed memory strobe signal **STROBE\_OUT** is used to drive a receiving flip-flop **46** residing in the microprocessor **45**. Such a configuration allows the microprocessor **45** to read in data **DATA\_1 . . . DATA\_n** from the memory **42** at a fixed delay of the memory strobe signal **STROBE\_IN**.

[0017] Figure 4 shows an exemplary digital delay locked loop **44** in accordance

with an embodiment of the present invention. In Figure 4, a chip clock **CHIP\_CLK** serves as an input to a digital delay array **50**. The digital delay array **50** outputs a delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** to a digital shift controller **52**.

[0018] In one or more embodiments, the digital delay array **50** may comprise a plurality of delay lines. One or more of these delay lines may comprise a filter to remove glitches that occur in the delay lines.

[0019] The digital shift controller **52**, in addition to inputting the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL**, inputs the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK**. The digital shift controller **52** comprises digital logic circuitry, of which a phase comparator (discussed and shown below in reference to Figure 5) is used to determine if the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** is in phase (i.e., delayed by the proper amount of time) with the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK**. In other words, the digital shift controller **52** determines whether the delay of the digital delay array **50** is more or less than a desired amount.

[0020] Dependent on the phase comparison of the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** and the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK**, the digital shift controller **52** outputs a direction signal **DIR** and a clock signal **CLK** to a shift register **54**.

[0021] The shift register **54** shifts/updates a delay code (e.g., a thermometer code) based on the direction signal **DIR** and the clock signal **CLK** from the digital shift controller **52**. The delay code stored in the shift register **54** is the basis for generating control signals **CONTROL** to the digital delay array **50** and a strobe digital delay line **56**. The delay code, via the control signals **CONTROL**, effectively controls the amount of delay cells that are activated within the respective digital delay array **50** and strobe digital delay line **56**.

[0022] The strobe digital delay line **56** is used to delay a memory strobe signal **STROBE\_IN** by a fixed amount in relationship to a delay of the digital delay array **50**, thereby producing a delayed memory strobe signal **STROBE\_OUT**

(refer to discussion above with reference to Figure 3). Thus, the strobe digital delay line 56 and the digital delay array 50 are both controlled by bits on the control signals **CONTROL**.

[0023] In one embodiment of the present invention, more 1s in the delay code stored in the shift register 54 may result in the activation of a decreased number of delay cells in the digital delay array 50 and the strobe digital delay line 56, thereby reducing the amount of delay of the digital delay array 50 and the digital delay line 56. In another embodiment of the present invention, more 1s in the delay code stored in the shift register 54 may result in the activation of an increased number of delay cells in the digital delay array 50 and the strobe digital delay line 56, thereby increasing the amount of delay of the digital delay array 50 and the digital delay line 56.

[0024] Figure 5 shows an exemplary digital shift controller 52 of a digital delay locked loop 44 in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention. In order to compare phases of the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK** and the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL**, the digital shift controller 52 uses a D flip-flop 58 as a phase comparator. The chip clock **CHIP\_CLK** is connected to the clock input of the D flip-flop 58 and the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** is connected to the D input of the D flip-flop 58. Thus, a positive edge on the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK** triggers the D flip-flop 58, at which point the D flip-flop 58 latches and outputs the value at its D input.

[0025] In the exemplary embodiment of the digital shift controller 52 shown in Figure 5, the D flip-flop 58 is a positive edge-triggered flip-flop. However, in other embodiments of the present invention, various other circuits may be used for phase comparison purposes. For example, in some embodiments of the present invention, a dual-edge or negative-edge triggered flip-flop may be used.

[0026] Typical phase comparators, such as the D flip-flop 58 shown in Figure 5,

can be used to compare phases between  $-180$  and  $+180$  degrees (i.e.,  $\pm\pi$ ). Thus, they have a limited phase capture range. If a delay of a particular delay element (e.g., digital delay array 50 shown in Figure 4) is outside the phase capture range of a desired delay point at digital delay locked loop reset and startup, an incorrect interpretation of a phase comparison may occur, thereby leading to failure of the digital delay locked loop. For example, in cases in which the delay is outside the phase capture range of a phase comparator, the digital delay locked loop may interpret the phase comparison to mean that more delay is needed, when, in reality, less delay is needed. Alternatively, the digital delay locked loop may interpret the phase comparison to mean that less delay is needed, when, in reality, more delay is needed.

[0027] Such incorrect interpretations become more prevalent and problematic as circuits experience a broad range of PVT conditions. In typical implementations, a digital delay locked loop is designed to provide a desired delay for nominal PVT conditions at the reset and startup of the digital delay locked loop. Any deviation from nominal PVT conditions at reset and startup must not cause the delay of a delay line/array of the digital delay locked loop to be outside  $\pm\pi$  of a desired delay point. Otherwise, the digital delay locked loop may fail to work properly.

[0028] Figure 6 shows timing diagrams associated with phase comparison of signals by the D flip-flop phase comparator 58 shown in Figure 5. In Figure 6, a waveform for the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK** is shown. Recall that the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK** serves as the clock input to the D flip-flop 58. A desired delay point is indicated by the line 60. Further, a phase capture range of the D flip-flop 58 is indicated by the 180 degrees ( $\pi$ ) intervals before and after the desired delay point 60.

[0029] In a first case, represented by the waveform (a), when a positive edge of the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** occurs in the  $\pi$  interval before the desired



delay point 60, a '1' is latched at the subsequent positive edge of the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK**. This '1' indicates that more delay is needed in order to delay the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** to the desired delay point 60.

[0030] In a second case, represented by the waveform (b), when a positive edge of the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** occurs in the  $\pi$  interval after the desired delay point 60, a '0' is latched at the prior positive edge of the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK**. This '0' indicates that less delay is needed in order to delay the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** to the desired delay point 60.

[0031] Thus, in both of the previous two cases, the delay of the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** was between  $\pm \pi$  of the desired delay point 60 (i.e., was within the phase capture range of the D flip-flop phase comparator 58 shown in Figure 5).

[0032] In a third case, represented by the waveform (c), a positive edge of the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** occurs before the  $\pi$  interval prior to the desired delay point 60. Thus, the delay of the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** is outside the phase capture region of the D flip-flop type phase comparator 58 (shown in Figure 5). As shown in Figure 6, in this case, a '0' is latched at the subsequent positive edge of the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK**. This '0' is then interpreted as less delay being needed. In actuality, however, more delay is needed.

[0033] In a fourth case, represented by the waveform (d), a positive edge of the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** occurs after the  $\pi$  interval after the desired delay point 60. Thus, the delay of the delayed chip clock **CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** is outside the phase capture region of the D flip-flop type phase comparator 58 (shown in Figure 5). As shown in Figure 6, in this case, a '1' is latched at the prior positive edge of the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK**. This '1' is then interpreted as more delay being needed. In actuality, however, less delay is needed.

[0034] Thus, in these last two cases, the delay of the delayed chip clock

**CHIP\_CLK\_DEL** is outside the phase capture range of the D flip-flop phase comparator **58** (shown in Figure 5), which, in turn, leads to incorrect interpretation as to whether more or less delay is needed. Such incorrect interpretation may lead to failure of the digital delay locked loop.

[0035] One or more embodiments of the present invention generally relate to a digital delay locked loop **44** (shown in Figure 3 and 4) that is designed to prevent incorrect phase comparator interpretation from leading to failure of the digital delay locked loop **44** (shown in Figures 3 and 4). In essence, one or more embodiments of the present invention relate to a digital delay locked loop **44** (shown in Figures 3 and 4) that includes one or more features for extending the phase capture range of the digital delay locked loop **44** (shown in Figures 3 and 4).

[0036] Referring to Figure 4 and the D flip-flop phase comparator **58** shown in Figure 5 above, a delay of the digital delay array **50**,  $T_A$ , should be as follows:

$$(0.5 + D) * T_{CHIP\_CLK} \leq T_A \leq (1.5 - D) * T_{CHIP\_CLK},$$

where  $D$  represents a duty cycle error of the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK** and  $T_{CHIP\_CLK}$  represents a period of the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK**. This relationship is equivalent to  $T_A$  being within  $\pm \pi$  of a desired delay point on the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK** including variability of a duty cycle error of the chip clock **CHIP\_CLK**.

[0037] It follows that in order for the delay of the digital delay array **50**,  $T_A$ , to be within the range expressed above, and thus, ensure proper lock at reset and startup of the digital delay locked loop **44**, the PVT variation of a delay cell,  $T_C$ , in the digital delay array **50** can only vary by:

$$\Delta T_C = \frac{1.5 - D}{0.5 + D}.$$

[0038] In order to meet this constraint to the extent possible, one or more embodiments of the present invention use a reset code to selectively update a

delay code stored in the shift register **54**. Recall that the delay code stored in the shift register **54** is dependent on the phase comparisons made by the phase comparator(s) **58** (shown in Figure 5) in the digital shift controller **52**.

[0039] In one exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a '0' in a delay code stored in the shift register **54** causes a deactivation of one or more delay cells and a '1' in a delay code stored in the shift register **54** causes an activation of one or more delay cells. In this embodiment of the present invention, the delay code stored in the shift register **54** is reset such that across any of the PVT conditions, the delay of the digital delay array **50** is never too long that it is misinterpreted (refer to waveform (d) shown in Figure 6).

[0040] In this particular implementation, the delay code stored in the shift register **54** is designed to have a relatively few number of 1's at reset and startup of the digital delay locked loop **44**. Thus, across all PVT conditions, at reset and startup, the delay of the digital delay array **50** is either (1) interpreted correctly (for cases represented by waveforms (a) and (b) shown in Figure 6) or (2) a short delay is interpreted incorrectly as even less delay being needed (for case represented by waveforms (c) shown in Figure 6).

[0041] Those skilled in the art will appreciate in this embodiment, the case represented by waveform (d) in Figure 6 is avoided. However, in other embodiments of the present invention, one or more of the other cases shown in Figure 6 may also be avoided.

[0042] In the latter case, in which the delay is incorrectly interpreted, the delay code eventually will become all 0's because the digital delay locked loop **44** will interpret the delay of the digital delay array **50** as being too long, when, in actuality, the delay is too short. In response to such an occurrence, a detection, or monitoring, circuit (not shown) configured to effectively monitor the delay code issues a reset (also referred to as "self-reset") that selectively updates/resets the

delay code to a value that indicates that more delay is needed than the amount of delay needed as indicated by the delay code at the initial reset/startup of the digital delay locked loop 44. In other words, in response to the delay code becoming all 0's, the digital delay locked loop 44, by way of the detection circuit (not shown), self-resets the delay code to having more 1's than the delay code had at the initial reset/startup of the digital delay locked loop 44.

[0043] In fast PVT corners, the delay code may become all 1's. This fact may be used to determine the self-reset value of the delay code. The PVT range covered by the initial and self-reset delay code values are individually smaller than an entire PVT range. However, a sum of the PVT range and other errors covered by the initial and self-reset delay code values is greater than the entire PVT and error range. Thus, the phase capture range, or the lock range, of the digital delay locked loop 44 is extended outside of the  $\pm \pi$  phase capture range discussed above.

[0044] In other embodiments of the present invention, a '0' in a delay code stored in the shift register 54 may cause the activation of an increased number of delay cells and a '1' in a delay code stored in the shift register 54 may cause a deactivation of a decreased number of delay cells. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the value of the delay code will change according to whether 0's and 1's indicate more or less delay being needed.

[0045] In one or more embodiments of the present invention, the detection circuit (not shown) referred to above may be part of the digital shift controller 52. However, in other embodiments of the present invention, the detection circuit (not shown) may be disposed elsewhere as part of the digital delay locked loop 44.

[0046] Advantages of the present invention may include one or more of the following. In one or more embodiments, because a phase capture range of a digital delay locked loop is extended past  $\pm \pi$  ( $\pm 180$  degrees), the digital delay locked loop is functional across a greater range of PVT conditions.

- [0047] In one or more embodiments, because a phase capture range of a digital delay locked loop is extended past  $\pm\pi$  ( $\pm 180$  degrees), the digital delay locked loop may tolerate larger clock duty cycle error.
- [0048] In one or more embodiments, because a phase capture range of a digital delay locked loop is extended past  $\pm\pi$  ( $\pm 180$  degrees), more error may be tolerated in process models used for the design of the digital delay locked loop.
- [0049] In one or more embodiments, because a phase capture range of a digital delay locked loop is extended past  $\pm\pi$  ( $\pm 180$  degrees), more error may be tolerated in extraction processes used for the design of the digital delay locked loop.
- [0050] In one or more embodiments, because a phase capture range of a digital delay locked loop is extended past  $\pm\pi$  ( $\pm 180$  degrees), the digital delay locked loop may cover multiple process nodes.
- [0051] In one or more embodiments, because a phase capture range of a digital delay locked loop is extended past  $\pm\pi$  ( $\pm 180$  degrees), the need for software manipulation of the digital delay locked loop is decreased.
- [0052] While the invention has been described with respect to a limited number of embodiments, those skilled in the art, having benefit of this disclosure, will appreciate that other embodiments can be devised which do not depart from the scope of the invention as disclosed herein. Accordingly, the scope of the invention should be limited only by the attached claims.